

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 LONDON 09697 01 OF 02 191728Z
ACTION EUR-08

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 INR-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 SP-02
NSC-05 HA-02 PA-01 NSAE-00 PM-03 L-01 /042 W
-----127030 191820Z /47

R 191721Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7298
INFO AMEMBASSY DUBLIN
AMCONSUL BELFAST

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 09697

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PGOV PINT UK EI
SUBJECT: NORTHERN IRELAND: NIMETZ MEETING WITH
ROY MASON

SUMMARY: COUNSELOR OF DEPT MATTHEW NIMETZ MET WITH
NORTHERN IRELAND SECRETARY ROY MASON JUNE 15 FOR REVIEW
OF NORTHERN IRELAND SITUATION, INCLUDING AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL REPORT, POSSIBILITY OF HMG POLITICAL
INITIATIVES, AND PROSPECTS FOR FUTURE. END SUMMARY

1. ASKED FOR VIEWS ON AI REPORT, MASON EXPLAINED
BRITISH PROPOSALS CONTAINED IN HIS JUNE 8 STATEMENT TO
COMMONS AND ADDED FOLLOWING COMMENTS:

A) BRITISH HAD COOPERATED FULLY WITH RECENT AI
INVESTIGATION, WHEREAS IN 1976 GOI HAD DECLINED TO
COOPERATE WITH AI TEAM IN REPUBLIC. AI HAD FOUND CONDI-
TIONS "FAR WORSE" IN REPUBLIC THEN THAN IN NI NOW, BUT
AFTER LEAKS IN IRISH TIMES, REPORT WAS NOT PUBLISHED BY
AI.

B) AI BASED CONCLUSIONS ON 78 CASES, ONLY THIRTEEN
OF WHICH INCLUDED BOTH PERSONAL INTERVIEWS AND SOME
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SECRET

PAGE 02 LONDON 09697 01 OF 02 191728Z

MEDICAL EVIDENCE, EVEN THOUGH HMG HAS INTERROGATED 3444
PERSONS IN 1977 THROUGH NOVEMBER.

C) UK INQUIRY MUST REMAIN PRIVATE; IF PUBLIC,
IMMUNITY WOULD BE GRANTED TO WITNESSES AND HMG WOULD BE
UNABLE TO PROSECUTE THOSE INDIVIDUALS WHERE EVIDENCE
WARRANTED SUCH ACTION.

D) ALL PRISONERS IN NO. IRELAND ARE ENTITLED TO

MEDICAL EXAMINATIONS BEFORE AND AFTER DETENTION, THOUGH FEW (AND ALMOST NO PROVOS) TAKE UP THE OFFER. MOREOVER, NO PRISONERS HAVE SUBSEQUENTLY CLAIMED IN COURTROOM THAT THEIR STATEMENTS HAD BEEN OBTAINED UNDER DURESS.

2. MASON SAID HE HAD READ SENATOR KENNEDY'S STATEMENT ON AI REPORT AND THOUGHT IT GENERALLY HELPFUL. (HOWEVER, ELSEWHERE IN CONVERSATION, MASON INDIRECTLY COUNTERED KENNEDY'S SUGGESTION FOR PUBLIC SITTING OF COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY BY STRESSING NEED TO CONDUCT INQUIRY IN PRIVATE.)

3. POSSIBLE NEW INITIATIVES. NIMETZ NOTED WIDESPREAD FEELING THAT HMG WOULD TAKE NO NEW POLITICAL INITIATIVES PRIOR TO UK NATIONAL ELECTIONS, WHENEVER THEY MAY BE. THIS TENDS TO FEED EXPECTATIONS THAT SOME INITIATIVE WILL OCCUR AFTER THE ELECTIONS, PARTICULARLY IF LABOR WINS. HOWEVER, IF NOTHING HAPPENS, THESE UNFULFILLED EXPECTATIONS MAY LEAD TO GREATER INSTABILITY IN NI.

4. MASON REPLIED HE DIDN'T REALLY KNOW WHETHER OR NOT INITIATIVES WERE PRECLUDED BEFORE THE ELECTION. REGARDLESS, HE HAS RECENTLY HELD SEPARATE MEETINGS WITH LEADING MEMBERS OF ALL NI PARTIES, TO DISCUSS WHOLE RANGE OF CURRENT NI PROBLEMS. HIS PURPOSE IS TO LEAVE AN OPENING FOR THE PARTIES TO RESPOND TO HMG'S FIVE-POINT PLAN.

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 LONDON 09697 01 OF 02 191728Z

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PAGE 01 LONDON 09697 02 OF 02 191729Z
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S E C R E T SECTION 02 OF 02 LONDON 09697

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5. MASON BELIEVES EACH OF THE PARTIES HAS A SELF-INTEREST IN CONTINUING SUCH TALKS. MASON TELLS THE SDLP THAT, IN CASE THE TORIES WIN, THE LATTER WILL BE LESS TEMPTED TO TRY A NEW COURSE IF DISCUSSIONS WITH HMG ARE ALREADY UNDER WAY. MASON TELLS THE UNIONISTS THAT IF THEY ARE WORRIED ABOUT THE "UNITY" TALK FROM THE REPUBLIC, THEY SHOULD BE SEEN IN TALKS WITH HMG SOONER RATHER THAN LATER.

6. FUTURE PROSPECTS. DISCUSSING PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE OF NI, MASON MADE THESE COMMENTS:

A) ANY SETTLEMENT MUST MEET THE CRITERIA ESTABLISHED BY COMMONS OF BROAD ACCEPTABILITY IN NI AND OF "PARTNERSHIP" BETWEEN THE COMMUNITIES;

B) WITH THE SECURITY SITUATION AND ECONOMIC INDICATORS ALL IMPROVING, HMG DETECTS NO RPT NO GROUND-SWELL AGAINST DIRECT RULE;

C) WHILE A DEVOLVED ASSEMBLY IN NI REMAINS HMG'S ULTIMATE GOAL, THE TIME IS NOT RIPE FOR THIS. THE CONCEPT OF "UPPER TIER" LOCAL GOVERNMENT WOULD RESULT IN DE FACTO PROTESTANT RULE, JUSTIFYING EARLIER PROVO
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 LONDON 09697 02 OF 02 191729Z

WARNINGS AND LEADING TO "REAL TROUBLE;"

D) POLITICAL MOVEMENT AND/OR A SOLUTION MAY WELL BRING LESS STABILITY THROUGH AN UPSURGE IN IRA ACTIVITY;

E) COOPERATION AMONG POLITICAL LEADERS OF BOTH NI COMMUNITIES IN NI DISTRICT COUNCILS, AND THE ELECTION OF THE ALLIANCE MAYOR OF BELFAST, ARE WELCOME SIGNS.

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